

Interested in keeping up with the effort to improve recreational data? Read on because here are three things you need to know...a well-known fishery manager joins the effort, the work plan gets approved, and why you need to visit Florida in August.

There's big news in regards to the saltwater angler registry. Earlier this month, the Executive Steering Committee tapped the state for one of its brightest and most respected managers. I'm pleased to announce that Gordon Colvin, who recently retired after serving 25 years as marine fisheries director for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, has signed on to spearhead the angler registry effort. He can be reached at Gordon.Colvin@noaa.gov.

We're not done bringing in more experienced professionals from the states. Pres Pate, former director of marine fisheries for North Carolina, has agreed to chair our Operations Team and will join the effort later this month. We're looking forward to having the state-level experience and demonstrated leadership of Gordon and Pres applied to the marine recreational information program.

The Operations Team's work plan, the blueprint for identifying priority projects, establishing work teams, and generating timelines, was the topic of discussion at several meetings over the past month. The Gulf of Mexico and Mid-Atlantic Councils, along with NOAA's Marine Fish Advisory Committee (MAFAC), each dedicated time on their agendas to discuss the Operations Team's plan for moving ahead. The Executive Steering Committee has directed the Operations Team to establish the five work teams described in the plan and begin work immediately to tackle the highest priority projects. Filling the rosters of those work teams is now underway. The approved work plan and meeting minutes are all available on our website - <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/>.

Finally, if you've ever wondered how an angler survey is put together, you'll want to visit St. Pete Beach, FL this August 7-9. Each of the five work teams will dig in for three days of roll-up-your-sleeves, get-down-to-details work. In cooperation with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Executive Steering Committee will host this working meeting. The public is welcome to sit in on any of the work group meetings to observe the nuts and bolts of how scientists and managers try to answer the questions of who fishes, where we go, and what we catch. More info on the meeting will be coming, but in the meantime, save the dates of August 7-9, 2007.

Until next time,

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